



Department of Commerce Safety Report

April 2003

Safety Report

April 2003

Introduction

This report provides an update to Department of Commerce (DOC) managers and employees on the progress of Departmental safety initiatives and information regarding important Department-wide safety issues for April 2003. The report also contains the latest available accident data for the Department. Section One of the report, Program Initiatives, provides updates on the safety initiatives outlined in the Safety Program Plan available at <http://ohrm.doc.gov/safetyprogram/safety.htm>. Section Two, Significant Safety Issues, outlines safety issues and concerns which arose in April 2003. Section Three, Injury Statistics, provides statistics regarding Department injuries, as reported to the Workers' Compensation Program for March 2003, and an analysis of the data to assist bureaus in focusing their safety efforts. Section Four, Survey Results, provides the April results from the on-line survey available through the intranet Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Program Web Site.

Section One: Program Initiatives

Commerce Safety Council Meeting: The Commerce Safety Council held their quarterly meeting on April 10, 2003. The meeting included a presentation by representatives of Medtronic, Inc., manufacturer of the Lifepak 500. The Lifepak 500 is an automated external defibrillator for cardiac emergencies. A number of the units were placed at Commerce facilities throughout the country and units are being purchased for placement at Herbert C. Hoover Building (HCHB). The Office of Occupational Safety and Health is establishing a blanket purchase agreement to allow Commerce facilities to purchase the units at a discounted rate.

The Office of Occupational Safety and Health also discussed the progress of the inspection at HCHB and the Health Unit Survey. Results of the inspection were provided to bureau representatives for review and comment to ensure accuracy of the findings. All validated findings are being corrected and significant issues have already been resolved. The Office of Occupational Safety and Health is requiring the correction of validated findings by July 1, 2003. The Health Unit survey was a significant success. Over 400 employees responded to a broadcast e-mail requesting comments and feedback on the HCHB Health Unit. The vast majority of employees expressed satisfaction with the Unit and the services provided. A number of suggestions were received to provide additional blood screenings, medical evaluations, and other programs. Enhancements to the services will be introduced in October 2003. At the Council meeting, Elaine Farrow spoke on the safety activities occurring at the Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS). Also, during the meeting the issue of bureau program safety direction arose. While the Department can and does provide general guidance and assistance to bureaus on safety issues, each bureau is responsible for developing their own safety program and ensuring their workplaces are safe.

Section Two: Significant Safety Issues

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome

The Office of Occupational Safety and Health and the Health Unit are received numerous inquiries regarding protective measures for severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS).

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the primary way that SARS appears to spread is by close person-to-person contact. Most cases of SARS have involved people who cared for or lived with someone with SARS, or had direct contact with infectious material (for example, respiratory secretions) from a person who has SARS. Potential ways in which SARS can be spread include touching the skin of other people or objects that are contaminated with infectious droplets and then touching your eye(s), nose, or mouth. This can happen when someone who is sick with SARS coughs or sneezes droplets onto themselves, other people, or nearby surfaces. It also is possible that SARS can be spread more broadly through the air or by other ways that are currently not known.

Employees and supervisors returning from trips to affected areas, or employees exposed to infected persons, should be aware of the symptoms of SARS. They include high fever ($> 38^{\circ}$ Celsius, $> 100.4^{\circ}$ Fahrenheit), dry cough, and shortness of breath or breathing difficulties. Persons who experience these symptoms are advised to see a doctor. The incubation period for SARS is typically 2-7 days, but may be as long as 10 days.

Geographical areas of significant concern to health authorities include China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Hanoi, and Toronto. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization are continuing to reassess travel recommendations and advisories as the outbreak evolves. Information on health advisories is available at:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/>

and

World Health Organization

<http://www.who.int/csr/sars/en/>

If you believe you have SARS, you should consult a health care provider or health unit immediately. To help your medical practitioner make a diagnosis, tell him or her about any recent travel to regions where cases of SARS have been reported and whether you were in contact with someone who had those symptoms.

Section Three: Injury Statistics and Analysis

This section provides information on the total number of Departmental injuries for the past five years, and analyzes the types of injuries across the Department. The information below reflects March 2003 statistics. Due to late submissions, processing limitations, and to ensure the accuracy of the information, this section will continue to include information up to the previous month. The data presented in the charts and tables are based upon Departmental Workers' Compensation Program records.

Incidence Rate: The incidence rate (IR) represents the number of injuries and illnesses per 100 full-time workers and is calculated as follows:

$$IR = \frac{N}{EH}(200,000)$$

N	=	Number of injuries and illnesses
EH	=	Total hours worked by all employees during the year ¹
200,000	=	Base for 100 equivalent full-time workers (40 hours per week, 50 weeks per year)

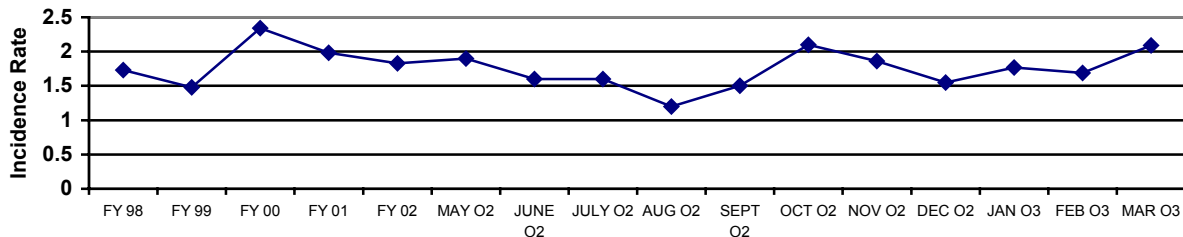
¹ The total hours worked were determined based on the total number of employees and the average hours.

The Commerce Workers' Compensation Program keeps records on all injury and illness claims, including those that did not include any lost work time. An accounting of all incidents allows follow-up and more comprehensive program review by safety representatives. However, the incident rates from those records are not directly comparable to industry trends, since they include many minor injuries and illnesses that are not considered "work-related" under Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards for private industry. An OSHA recordable incident is a work-related injury or illness that resulted in one or more of the following: medical treatment beyond first aid, a significant injury or illness diagnosed by a physician or other licensed health care professional, days away from work, restricted work or transfer to another job, loss of consciousness, or death.

For comparative purposes, table 1A, included as page nine of this report, provides data that more closely correspond to the recordable injury criteria. The remaining tables and charts include data for all cases submitted to the Workers' Compensation Program.

Chart 1

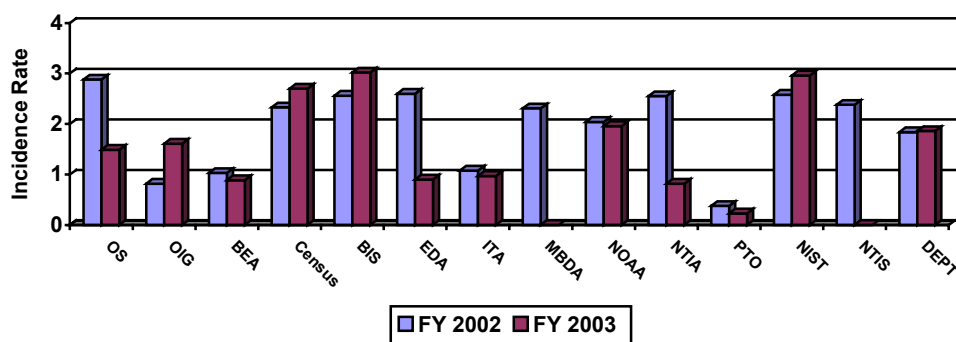
Total Case Incidence Rate Trend



Major Findings include:

- **The FY 2003 Total Case Incidence Rate (TCIR) for Commerce is essentially equivalent to the rate for FY 2002, but down from FY 2001.** The TCIR is 1.86 for FY 2003, 1.84 for FY 2002, and 1.98 for FY 2001. The incident rate of 2.09 for March 2003 is higher than the March 2002 incident rate of 1.90. The increase is due to a large number of reported illnesses associated with carpet cleaning activity at a Census office building in Hagerstown, Maryland. The illnesses included eye irritation, shortness of breath, and dizziness. The facility has since changed the procedure for carpet cleaning to prevent a future occurrence. A total of 315 Workers' Compensation claims were submitted thus far for FY 2003.
- **Of the larger bureaus, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and the Bureau of the Census have higher TCIRs for FY 2003 when compared to FY 2002 (see table 1 and chart 2).** Most of the recent injuries at the Bureau of the Census were the result of illnesses from exposure to vapors from a cleaning agent. NIST also saw a number of injuries during the previous month from employees slipping on ice. While the total injury rate for NIST is up from FY03, the recordable injury rate (i.e., the number of significant injuries) is down substantially.
- **Of the smaller bureaus (i.e., bureaus with less than 500 employees), the Economic Development Administration (EDA), Minority Business Development Agency, and the National Technical Information Service (NTIS) have not had a single reported injury.**
- **The Total Recordable Case Incidence Rate (TRCIR) for Commerce is down from previous years.** The TRCIRs for Commerce are 1.31 for FY 2003, 1.60 in FY 2002, and 1.72 in FY 2001.

Chart 2



Types of Injuries: Many of the injuries reported can be prevented through improved safety awareness and proper maintenance. A Departmental and bureau focus on eliminating injuries and illnesses is essential. Eliminating injuries and illnesses can be accomplished by evaluating the types of claims submitted and structuring safety awareness training programs to eliminate accidents. Information on types of injuries is provided in charts 4 and 5, and tables 2 and 2A.

Key findings are explained below:

- **“Slips/Falls” continue to be the most prevalent type of injury.** “Slips/falls” accounted for 36 percent of all injuries within the Department for FY 2002 and for 35 percent in March 2003. Many of the recent slips and falls were weather-related. More attention must be given to walking surfaces to reduce injuries from slips and falls. Floors that are wet from mopping must have highly visible warning signs, so employees know to avoid those areas. Trips from cords strung across floors continue to cause injuries. Telephone lines, electrical cords, and other cords should be routed away from walking areas.
- **“Struck and Contact” injuries were second in frequency for March 2003.** These injuries combined for 21 percent of those reported for FY 2002 and for 14 percent in March 2003. A majority of the injuries were caused when employees struck open drawers, doors, or low overhead clearances. Those injuries can be avoided by closing drawers that are not being used. Employees should also be aware of their surroundings and use caution. Low overhead clearances should be marked with highly visible paint or tape.
- **“Exertion” injuries remain a concern.** “Exertion” injuries were 20 percent and 25 percent of total injuries for FY 2002 and March 2003, respectively. To prevent back

injuries, employees should use carts to move objects and avoid carrying them by hand. The proper lifting technique includes keeping the back straight and lifting with the legs. For jobs that require repetitive motion, an ergonomics assessment should be conducted.

- **“Exposures” were evident as well.** Exposures accounted for five percent of the injuries or illnesses reported in FY 2002 and 12 percent for March 2003. Most exposure illnesses can be prevented through proper ventilation and use of personal protective equipment.

Chart 4
Injury Type As Percentage of Total Injuries for
FY 2002

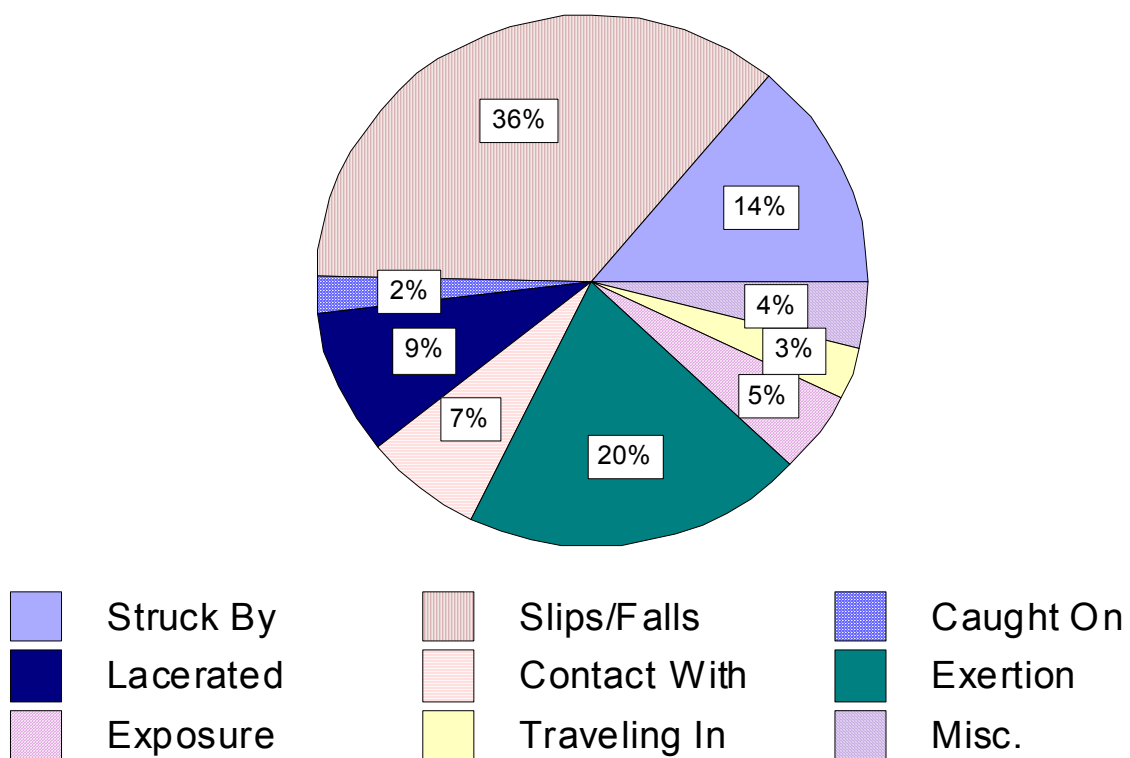
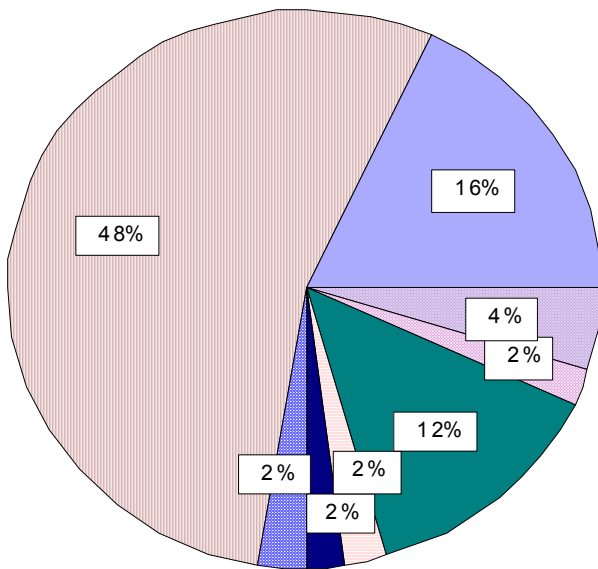


Chart 5

Injury Type As Percentage Of Total Injuries

FEBRUARY



MARCH

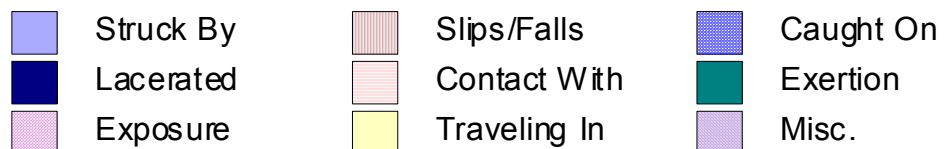
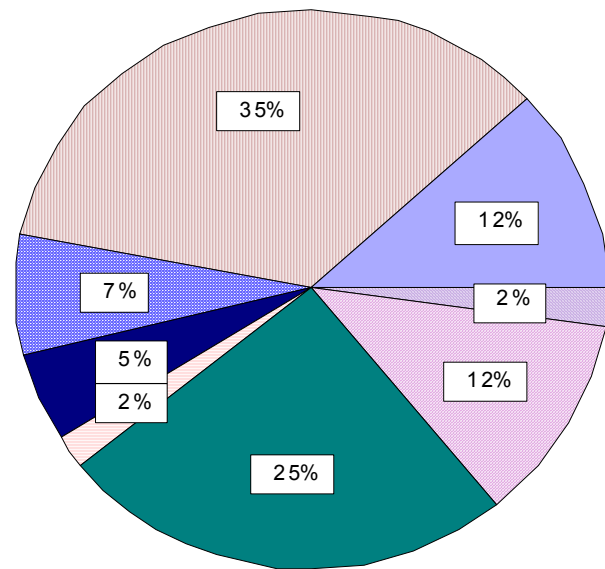


TABLE 1
TOTAL CASE INCIDENCE RATE

Bureau	FY1998		FY 1999		FY 2000		FY 2001		FY2002		February 2003		March 2003		FY 2003 (To Date)	
	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate
Office of the Secretary	17	2.38	19	2.20*	35	3.94	22	2.47	23	2.88	0	0	1	1.49	6	1.49
Office of Inspector General	2	1.22	2	1.32	4	2.98	3	2.15	1	0.82	1	9.73	0	0	1	1.61
Bureau of Economic Analysis	8	1.75	4	0.88	1	0.23	5	1.12	4	1.03	0	0	0	0	2	0.89
Bureau of the Census	282	1.34	311	1.04	383	2.83	393	2.41	241	2.33	23	2.83	37	4.61	130	2.70
Bureau of Industry and Security	10	3.02	11	3.08	15	4.06	9	2.44	9	2.56	0	0	0	0	5	3.02
Economic Development Administration	4	1.72	9	3.67	4	1.69	5	2.08	6	2.60	0	0	0	0	1	0.90
International Trade Administration	26	1.33	18	0.92	24	1.23	12	0.62	18	1.08	0	0	1	0.72	8	0.97
Minority Business Development Agency	1	1.13	1	1.10	3	3.40	4	4.36	2	2.31	0	0	0	0	0	0
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	280	2.52	317	2.78	307	2.69	247	2.18	228	2.04	15	1.61	15	1.60	110	1.96
National Telecommunications & Information Administration	3	1.22	2	0.88	2	0.87	7	3.03	6	2.55	0	0	0	0	1	0.82
Patent and Trademark Office	38	0.73	27	0.47	29	0.50	31	0.55	24	0.38	0	0	0	0	7	0.23
Technology Administration	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5.29
National Institute of Standards and Technology	105	3.57	84	2.87	79	2.82	68	2.34	76	2.58	9	3.70	5	2.07	43	2.96
National Technical Information Service	2	0.66	6	2.61	4	2.15	1	0.52	4	2.38	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	778	1.73	811	1.48	890	2.34	807	1.98	642	1.84	48	1.69	59	2.09	315	1.86
Decennial Census 2000	182	3.4	890	11.3	4798	6.7	32	13.3								

* Total Case Incidence Rate includes all cases reported to the Workers' Compensation Program.

** Population fluctuations can have a serious positive or negative impact on the Total Case Incidence Rate.

TABLE 1A
TOTAL RECORDABLE CASE INCIDENCE RATE*

Bureau	FY1998		FY 1999		FY 2000		FY 2001		FY2002		February 2003		March 2003		FY 2003 (To Date)	
	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate
Office of the Secretary	17	2.38	19	2.20*	30	3.38	17	1.91	22	2.75	0	0	1	1.49	6	1.49
Office of Inspector General	2	1.22	1	0.66	3	2.24	3	2.15	1	0.82	1	9.73	0	0	1	1.61
Bureau of Economic Analysis	7	1.53	4	0.88	0	0	5	1.12	3	0.77	0	0	0	0	1	0.45
Bureau of the Census	244	1.15	288	0.96	345	2.55	332	2.04	212	2.05	16	1.97	16	2.00	82	1.70
Bureau of Industry and Security	8	2.42	10	2.80	13	3.52	8	2.17	9	2.56	0	0	0	0	5	3.02
Economic Development Administration	4	1.72	8	3.26	4	1.69	5	2.08	6	2.60	0	0	0	0	0	0
International Trade Administration	24	1.23	17	0.86	22	1.13	11	0.57	10	0.60	0	0	1	0.72	8	0.97
Minority Business Development Agency	1	1.13	1	1.10	2	2.27	4	4.36	2	2.31	0	0	0	0	0	0
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	260	2.34	275	2.41	289	2.53	225	1.98	203	1.81	11	1.18	11	1.18	89	1.59
National Telecommunications & Information Administration	3	1.22	2	0.88	2	0.87	5	2.16	3	1.27	0	0	0	0	1	0.82
Patent and Trademark Office	35	0.67	26	0.45	29	0.50	31	0.55	24	0.38	0	0	0	0	7	0.23
Technology Administration	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5.29
National Institute of Standards and Technology	87	2.96	76	2.60	66	2.36	55	1.89	59	2.00	6	2.47	1	0.41	21	1.45
National Technical Information Service	2	0.66	5	2.18	4	2.15	1	0.52	3	1.78	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	694	1.54	732	1.34	809	2.13	702	1.72	557	1.60	34	1.20	30	1.06	222	1.31
Decennial Census 2000	182	3.4	890	11.3	4798	6.7	32	13.3								

* The Total Recordable Case Incidence Rate includes only those injuries or illnesses that are reportable to OSHA under 29 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 1904.

** Population fluctuations can have a serious positive or negative impact on the Total Recordable Case Incidence Rate.

Table 2

**INJURY TYPES BY BUREAU
AGENCIES WITH MORE THAN 500 EMPLOYEES
(Through March 2003)**

BUREAU	NOAA			CENSUS			NIST			PTO			ITA			OS			TOTAL
Fiscal Year	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	
Struck By/Against An Object	24	29	26	56	27	15	16	8	11	6	4	3	1	1	2	5	2	1	237
Falls/Slips	72	59	34	153	96	62	19	22	15	13	7	1	5	7	4	10	2	1	582
Caught On An Object	4	5	7	9	8	2	1	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	47
Cuts/Bites	20	26	3	36	19	7	12	9	0	2	2	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	140
Contact With An Object	13	19	2	24	11	3	1	6	0	6	6	1	1	2	0	1	1	0	97
Exertion/ Motion	64	64	31	54	37	28	7	17	7	3	2	0	1	2	0	3	1	3	324
Exposure To Chemicals/ Elements	13	9	3	7	6	9	3	3	3	0	1	0	1	6	1	0	12	0	77
Traveling In Car/Metro/ Taxi	4	10	0	10	16	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	43
Miscellaneous*	2	7	4	8	21	4	1	8	2	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	2	0	63
TOTAL	216	228	110	357	241	130	60	76	43	31	24	7	10	18	8	22	23	6	1610

* Miscellaneous includes injuries not covered in the standard OSHA types of injuries. These include twisting/bending injuries, emotional/psychological stress injuries, injuries which exacerbate a preexisting condition resulting in conditions such as heart attack, seizures, and stroke.

** Decennial Census claims were omitted to provide a clearer picture of injury trends

Table 2A

**INJURY TYPES BY BUREAU
AGENCIES WITH LESS THAN 500 EMPLOYEES
(Through March 2003)**

Bureau	OIG			ESA/BEA			EDA			TA			NTIS			NTIA			MBDA			BIS			Total
Fiscal Year	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	
Struck By/Against An Object	0	0	0	2	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	2	15
Falls/Slips	2	0	1	2	2	1	4	5	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	3	0	3	1	0	6	0	1	35
Caught On An Object	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Cuts/Bites	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Contact With An Object	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	6
Exertion/ Motion	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	2	2	10
Exposure to Chemicals/ Elements	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Traveling In Car/Metro/ Taxi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Miscellaneous*	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	5
Total	2	1	1	5	4	2	5	6	1	0	0	1	1	4	0	7	6	1	4	2	0	8	9	5	75

* Miscellaneous includes injuries not covered in the standard OSHA types of injuries. These include twisting/bending injuries, emotional/psychological stress injuries, injuries which exacerbate a preexisting condition resulting in conditions such as heart attack, seizures, and stroke.

Section Four: Survey Results

We continue to receive comments through the Safety Survey Web Site. We are using employee comments to help shape a safety program responsive to employee issues and concerns. The Web Site can be accessed through the Office of Human Resources Management Homepage at <http://ohrm.doc.gov/>.

Safety Survey Statistics

We received 54 responses through the Web Site survey. The following tables provide some data regarding the distribution of responses by bureau and general geographical area, as well as general safety impressions.

Safety Survey March Results

Have you experienced a safety lapse in your work area during the past 3 months?		
Answer	Count	Percent
No	39	72%
Yes	15	28%

Have you noticed any safety improvements in your work area or in the Department as a whole during the past 3 months?		
Answer	Count	Percent
No	21	39%
Yes	31	57%
No Answer	2	4%

Geographical Location		
State	Count	Percent
AK	1	1.85%
CO	1	1.85%
DC	6	11.11%
FL	1	1.85%
MA	1	1.85%
MD	10	18.52%
OR	1	1.85%
PA	20	37.04%
RI	1	1.85%
TX	2	3.70%
VA	7	12.96%
WA	1	1.85%
WI	1	1.85%

Bureau Breakdown		
Answer	Count	Percent
CENSUS	8	14.81%
EDA	1	1.85%
ITA	2	3.70%
NIST	3	5.55%
NOAA	31	57.41%
OS	3	5.55%
PTO	6	11.11%